

FROM FOREIGN SHORES.

Consul Gibbs Writes From Madagascar—
The Supremacy of the French-Colored Men Holding High Official Position and Eligible to All Places of Trust and Honor—A Dark Picture From Home.

Tamatave, Madagascar, Aug. 5 1900.
Dear Friend Cooper: I have your favor June 14th last, in which you say you would like to have a line from me, that you 'may let the friends over here know what you are doing. Well here it is line upon line, if not precept, etc. I am "still doing business at the same old stand," and doubt if I have anything to say regarding this "far away post," that would particularly interest your readers, engrossed as I perceive they are, in domestic phases and in the alignment of our recent acquisitions.

Regarding the physical development or moral progress of Madagascar, as you know it is now a French province, with a Governor General and staff, all appointees from France. The Government is doing considerable to open up the country by means of telegraphs, railroads, turnpikes and canals. At Paris they recently voted sixty millions francs (12 million dollars) for a railroad from here to Tananarivo the capital—200 miles from here, over a mountainous and broken country. The cap-



HON. M. W. GIBBS,
U. S. Consul to Tamatave, Madagascar.

ital is situated on a plateau 5,000 feet above sea level, with a climate cool and bracing. Here at Tamatave a fire place or heating stove in a house are unknown appendages. The Hovas for a long period were the rulers previous to the conquest and occupation by the French who by diplomacy "force and iron will" the means usually adopted by the strong when a coveted prize looms in the distance, added an immense territory to their colonial possessions. But perhaps in the interest of civilization, the change is not to be deplored. The Hovas were a superior class of the Madagascan people, the rulers being men of education and ability, but not equal in quality or quantity to cope with the energy, wealth and military prowess of a powerlike France.

The mental and physical conditions of the great bulk of the natives were not, and are not, inviting; they were held by a mild system of slavery, a system that in substance still exists under French rule as to forced labor on public works. The severity of tasks and bad rum are said by a friendly society at Paris in its protest, "to be fact decimating their number." The French Government, however, are establishing an extension of schools for the natives, where industrial training will be the marked feature, and which on yesterday, the occasion being an official visit,

the Governor was pleased to pay me, I took pains to extol; as you know industrial training is my pet. The General wisely remarking, "we wish first to place the present generation in a position to earn more money, so they will be able to give their offspring a higher education if they wish." The English, Norwegians from America, the Friends and other missions are doing something for their educational and moral progress, but the appliances are meager compared with the herculean task that awaits them.

There is however this difference in the problem here. There are colored men occupying places of prominence as officials, as tellers in banks, clerks in counting houses and merchant stores. Here it is condition and not color, wealth and position, the "open sesame." On social occasions the brother in black is in evidence, without special notice of the past, and strangest of it all, on the following day, the sun and other heavenly bodies seem to stand or revolve in their accustomed orbits. My health has been good although the bubonic pest, periodical in its visitations, has been alarming in the suddenness of its destruction of life. In the spring it is again expected to alight without "healing in its wings." But I will not longer dwell on Madagascan peculiarities, many of which, as elsewhere, are not chastening. What I am interested in, and want to know about is, how you are getting on with the "old grudge?" If I judge correctly from the journals that reach me, that during my near three years' absence, its status, unlike renowned grape juice has neither dissipated or improved by lapse of time, and that lynching and disfranchisement still have the right of way.

The expansion of our sovereignty is fraught with complications and onerous duties from the statesman, the zeal of the humanitarian, and one of reformer and friends of equitable government, unflinching determination, that kindness and justice shall be ceded to the people thereof. But is the prospect for the dissemination or ascendancy of these virtues either bright or promising? If the exercise and enjoyments of these attributes are not growing to millions of the American household, is it reasonable to expect they will dominate abroad? There is reason for apprehension that our cousins in the East will find little change of despotic tendencies amid the rank and file of American adventurers. The philosophy of our system of government seems out of balance, Cicero wrote "that excessive liberty leads both nations and individuals into excessive slavery."

But amid the lights and shadows that environ the Negroes he is neither undeserving of the assistance rendered, and indispensable for educational development, which has been generous, one for which he is grateful, although handicapped by a prejudice confronting on so many avenues of industry, and forbidding his entry. Not undeserving for patient and non-anarchist in the realms of labor, his right to possess and enjoying equality of citizenship is written with blood and bravery on the battle field of every war of the republic where he "fell forward as fits a man." Munificent contributions of Christians and philanthropists, for missionary work abroad, are greatly in evidence, given with a self complacency of duty done; but however, fail to vivify the declining pulse beat for equality before the law and justice at home. Manifestly there is an absence of that ar-

raignment and condemnation of wrong done the weak, that contributed so largely to abolish the "coor laws of England" and slavery on the United States. History is the record, that it is the men of moral courage and heroism who by pen and voice, that sociality and gain cannot intimidate and combat evil in their very midst that "leave foot prints in the sands of time." This we know to be abundantly beneficial.

But is it not also true that the rapidity of reform is accelerated by wisdom in recognizing aright present conditions, rather than by a strained conception of gratitude for the past. Do we not trust too much to appeal, folded arms, and the "masterly inactivity" of the even tenor of our political ways. Gibbon in his "decline of Rome" wrote that "gratitude was expensive." It has taken a long time for the idea to penetrate the Negro, but he should not be blamed if what phrenologist say of him be true, but he is absorbing and asking if he is making the best practical use of his franchise by cohesion; while every other class of voters enjoy protection and emoluments by division. I must close this letter already too long. Don't regard me as a pessimist, I know that Bacon wrote that "men of age object too much", but the fact is, Cooper, it has been so long since I heard a 4th of July hallelujah chorus that I am getting out of tune.

McKinley has been again nominated I see, and doubtless will be elected with a Congress in harmony, thus giving the party another lease of power, which, God grant, let us hope, may redound to the welfare of all the people. Say to my many friends that they are, "though lost to sight to memory dear."

Truly your friend,

M. W. GIBBS.

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